

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A fastener assembly comprising:
 - a fastening element; and
 - a fastener comprising:
 - a base;
 - a housing connected to the base, the housing adapted to retain the fastening element when the fastening element is inserted in the housing; and
 - a latch connected to a flexible portion of the base and positioned relative to the housing to retain the fastening element by interference with a lateral surface of the fastening element, the latch including a surface that is proximate an opening in the housing, wherein each of the flexible portion of the base and the surface is externally accessible with the fastening element retained in the housing, the latch configured such that the fastening element is inhibited from being removed from the housing absent an application of a force applied to the surface proximate the opening to flex the flexible portion of the base.
2. (Currently Amended) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the base includes a flange and wherein the housing and the ~~depressible~~ latch are both connected to the flange.
3. (Original) The fastener of claim 2, wherein the flange is configured so that it can be connected to a sheet of material.
4. (Original) The fastener of claim 3, wherein each of the flange and sheet of material comprise a thermoplastic and the flange and sheet of material are heat sealed together.

5. (Original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the housing comprises a side wall and a retaining lip.
6. (Original) The fastener of claim 5, wherein the retaining lip comprises a notch to accommodate a fastening element attachment mechanism.
7. (Original) The fastener of claim 5, wherein the side wall comprises a semi-circular section.
8. (Canceled)
9. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the latch is flexible.
10. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the latch comprises a flange generally parallel to a base of the housing and projecting towards the interior of the housing.
11. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the latch comprises a portion corresponding to the shape of the fastening element.
12. (Original) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the fastener is formed in a sheet of material.
13. (Previously Presented) A fastener assembly, comprising:
 - a fastening element; and
 - a fastener comprising:
 - a base;
 - a housing connected to the base, the housing sized and adapted to retain the fastening element; and
 - a latch connected to a flexible portion of the base and positioned relative to the housing so that the latch in combination with the housing retains the fastening element,

the latch including a surface that is proximate an opening in the housing, wherein each of the flexible portion of the base and the surface is externally accessible with the fastening element retained in the housing, the latch configured such that the fastening element is inhibited from being removed from the housing absent an application of a force applied to the surface proximate the opening to flex the flexible portion of the base.

14. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the fastening element is flexible.

15. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the housing is flexible.

16 -17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) A fastener that can be attached to a first surface, comprising:
a base;
a housing connected to the base, the housing comprising a retaining lip having a second surface, at least a portion of the second surface being substantially parallel to the first surface, the housing being sized and adapted to retain a fastening element; and
a latch positioned relative to the housing that in combination with the housing retains the fastening element, wherein the latch comprises a first portion to which pressure is applied when the fastening element is moved into engagement with the fastener and a second portion comprising a third surface disposed intermediate the first surface and the second surface upon which the fastening element rests when in an engaged position, at least a portion of the third surface being substantially parallel to the first surface, wherein the first portion is connected to the base external to the housing.

19. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 18, wherein the base includes a flange and wherein the housing and the latch are both connected to the flange.

20. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 19, wherein the flange is configured so that it can be connected to a sheet of material.

21. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 20, wherein each of the flange and the sheet of material comprise a thermoplastic, and wherein the flange and the sheet of material are configured to be heat sealed together.

22. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 18, wherein the housing comprises a side wall and a retaining lip.

23. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 22, wherein the retaining lip comprises a notch to accommodate a fastening element attachment mechanism.

24. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 22, wherein the side wall comprises a semi-circular section.

25. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 18, wherein the housing is flexible.

26. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 18, wherein the latch is flexible.

27. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 18, wherein the latch comprises a flange generally parallel to the base, the latch projecting towards an interior of the housing.

28. (Currently Amended) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the base includes a flange connected to both the housing and the ~~depressible~~ latch, and wherein the flange is made of thermoplastic.

29. (Currently Amended) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the base includes a flange connected to both the housing and the ~~depressible~~ latch, and wherein the flange and an inflatable bladder are heat sealed together.

30. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the housing comprises a side wall and a retaining lip.

31. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 30, wherein the retaining lip comprises a notch to accommodate a fastening element attachment mechanism.

32. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 30, wherein the side wall comprises a semi-circular section.

33. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the latch comprises a portion corresponding to a shape of the fastening element.

34. (Previously Presented) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the latch is positioned relative to the housing to retain the fastening element by interference with a lateral surface of the fastening element.

35-54. (Canceled)

55. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 1, wherein the fastener is attached to an object and the flexible portion of the base flexes in a direction of the object.

56-61. (Canceled)

62. (Currently Amended) A fastener assembly comprising:

- a fastening element; and
- a fastener comprising:
 - a base having a flexible portion;
 - a latch connected to the flexible portion of the base; and
 - a housing connected to the base, the housing adapted to retain the fastening element so that a surface of the latch located proximate an opening in the housing and the flexible portion of the base are each externally accessible with the fastening element retained in the housing such that a force can be applied to the surface to flex the flexible portion of the base depress the latch,

wherein the latch is positioned relative to the housing to retain the fastening element by interference with a lateral surface of the fastening element.

63. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the base includes a flange and wherein the housing and the latch are both connected to the flange.

64. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 63, wherein the flange is configured so that it can be connected to a sheet of material.

65. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 64, wherein each of the flange and sheet of material comprise a corresponding thermoplastic and the flange and sheet of material are sealed together.

66. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the housing comprises a side wall and a retaining lip.

67. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 66, wherein the retaining lip comprises a notch to accommodate a fastening element attachment mechanism.

68. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 66, wherein the side wall comprises a semi-circular section.

69. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the latch is flexible.

70. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the latch comprises a flange generally parallel to the base of the housing and projecting towards an interior of the housing.

71. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the latch comprises a portion corresponding to the shape of the fastening element.

72. (Previously Presented) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the fastener is formed in a sheet of material.

73. (Currently Amended) The fastener of claim 62, wherein the housing is configured such that the ~~depressible~~ latch is accessible such that an external force can be applied by an operator's finger to depress the latch.

74. (Cancelled)

75. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the fastener is configured to permit the fastening element to be withdrawn from the housing over the latch and the flexible portion of the base.

76. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 13, wherein the fastener is configured such that the flexible portion of the base remains externally accessible with the fastening element retained in the housing and the fastener coupled to an object.

77. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 76, wherein the object includes an inflatable bladder.

78. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 77, wherein the fastener assembly is coupled to the inflatable bladder, and wherein a resistance provided by an inflation level of the inflatable bladder resists the force applied to the surface proximate the opening to flex the flexible portion of the base.

79. (New) A fastener assembly, comprising:
a fastening element; and
a fastener comprising:
a base having a flexible portion;
a housing connected to the base and including a retaining lip, the housing sized and adapted to retain the fastening element; and
a latch connected to the flexible portion of the base and positioned relative to the housing to retain the fastening element within the housing upon sliding the fastening element under the retaining lip,
wherein the flexible portion of the base is manually depressible relative to the fastening element to permit the fastening element to be slid out of the housing over the flexible portion of the base and the latch.

80. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 79, wherein the base is configured so that it can be connected to a sheet of material.

81. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 80, wherein the base includes a thermoplastic, and wherein the base is configured so that it can be heat sealed to the sheet of material.

82. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 79, wherein the retaining lip comprises a notch to accommodate a fastening element attachment mechanism.

83. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 79, wherein the base is configured to be connected a bladder.

84. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 83, wherein the base is configured such that the flexible portion of the base flexes in a direction of the bladder.

85. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 79, wherein the latch is configured relative to the housing to retain the fastening element by interference with a lateral surface of the fastening element.

86. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 79, wherein the fastener is configured such that the flexible portion of the base remains externally accessible with the fastening element retained in the housing and the fastener coupled to an object.

87. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 86, wherein the object includes an inflatable bladder.

88. (New) The fastener assembly of claim 87, wherein the fastener assembly is coupled to the inflatable bladder, and wherein a resistance provided by an inflation level of the inflatable bladder resists a force applied to flex the flexible portion of the base.